An Enquiry into the *Roman* STYLUS.

THIS Inſtrument is of Braſs; It was found under ground in *Scotland*, *Anno* 1704. and is ſuppoſed to be the Roman *Stylus*, with its *Theca Graphiaria*, as will appear very probable from what follows;

Before the Invention of Paper or Parchment, the *Romans* uſed to write on *Palm* Leaves, or the Barks of Trees; but afterwards they wrote upon Tables which they called *Tabulæ Pugillares*. Theſe Tables were ſometimes of Wood, or Ivory, and ſometimes of Parchment covered over with Wax; from whence they were called *Tabulæ ceratæ*. *Ovid. Lib.* 1. *Amor. Eleg.* 12.

Ite hinc, difficiles funebria ligna Tabellæ:
Tuq; negaturis Cera referta notis.
Quam puto de longæ collectam flore cicutæ
Melle ſub infami Corſica miſit apis.

Sometimes likeways the word *Cera* is uſed for *Tabula Cerata*; as by *Sueton in vit. Jul. Cæſ. cap.* 83. *In ima cera C. Octavium*

in familiam nomenq; adoptavit. Et *Plaut. in Bacchid: Act. 4. Sc. 5. Effer ceram,* &c.

The Instrument made use of for writing on these *Tabulæ ceratæ* was called *STYLUS*; which, as some have observed, was made of Iron or Brass, and likeways of Silver or Gold: Its Form was Long, Small, and Pointed at one end; that with more ease it might engrave the Letters upon the Wax. *Athelmus in Ænigmate de Pugillaribus*

Melligeris apibus mea prima processit origo,
Sed pars exterior crescebat cætera sylvis.
Calceamenta mihi tradebant tergora dura,
Nunc ferri stimulus faciem proscindit amænam,
Flexibus & sulcis obliquat ad instar aratri.

The *Stylus* was sometimes called *Graphium*, from the Greek word γραφὶς, *Ovid. Lib. 1. Amor. Eleg. 11.*

Quid digitis opus est Graphium lassare tenendo?

It was made use of frequently among the *Romans* in place of a Poinard. *Sueton. in vit. Jul. Cæs. cap. 82. Cæsar Cassii brachium arreptum Graphio trajecit.* And *in vit. Calig: cap: 28. Caligula cum discerpi Senatorem concupisset, subornavit, qui ingredientem Curiam repente hostem publicum appellantes invaderent, Graphiisq; confossum, lacerandum cæteris traderent. Seneca, Lib. 1. de clemen. cap. 14. Erixionem Equitem Romanum quia filium flagellis occiderat, populus in foro Graphiis confodit. Gregorius Turonensis de Glor. Martyr. Lib. 1. Cap. 43. Cassianum Martyrem pueri Stylis confecerunt. Prudentius Hymn: 11. de Cassiano Martyre,*

Conjiciunt alii lapides inq; ora Tabellas
Frangunt, relisa fronte lignum dissilit,
Buxa crepant cerata, *&c.*

Stylus was also made use of for *Pugio*, as by *Cicero in Orat. pro Muræn: Etsi meus ille Stylus fuisset*; But he uses it in the contrary sense, where he says, *Cedat forum castris, otium militiæ, stylus gladio:* And the *Italians*, by corrupting the word,

cali

call it *Stiletto* to this hour. *Simposius Ænig*: 1. does very exactly describe the *Stylus* or *Graphium* in the following Verses;

De summo planus, sed non ego planus ab imo,
Versor utrimq; manu, diverso munere fungor;
Altera pars revocat quicquid pars altera fecit.

From which it appears, That, as the one end of the *Stylus* was pointed, so the other was flat and smooth, serving to cancell what had been written, by smoothing over the Wax, and making it fit for a new Impression. From whence *Hieronymus ad Domionem* has this expression, *Stultus ego qui me putaverim hæc absq; Philosophia scire non posse, qui meliorem Styli partem eam legerim quæ deleret quam quæ scriberet.* Likeways, *Horat. Lib.* 1. *Sat.* 10. *Sat.*

Sæpe Stylum vertas, iterum quæ digna legi sunt
Scripturus. .....

So that, according to *Erasmus*, the Phrase *Vertere Stylum* was used among the Romans for *To unsay any thing that had been said before.*

For preserving the *Stylus*, they made use of a Pennar, which they called *Graphiarium* or *Theca Graphiaria vel Calamaria*; *Martial. Lib.* 14. *Epig.* 21.

Hæc tibi erunt armata suo Graphiaria ferro,
Si puero dones non leve munus erit.

Suet. in vit. Claud. cap. 35. *Et vix remisit ne cuivis comiti aut librario, calamariæ aut graphiariæ Thecæ adimirentur.*

Of what these *Graphiaria* were made, is uncertain; but 'tis probable they were of Metall, to avoid any Inconveniences might happen by the Points of the *Styli:* and likeways of a Size sufficient to contain severals at once.

The *Stylus* was frequently used among the *Romans* to denote any particular manner of Writing. *Terent. in Prol. And. Dissimili oratione factæ sunt & stylo. Cicero de clar. Orat. cap.* 45. *Orationes Attico stylo scriptæ. Plinius Lib.* 1. *Epist.* 8. *Stylus pressus & demissus. Quintil. lib.* 2. *cap.* 4. *rudis stylus*; and in this sense we use the word Style in our own Language.

Thus

Thus it appears to be a very probable Conjecture that this is the *Roman Stylus* with its *Graphiarium*; which will be yet clearer, if the following Objection be removed, *viz* That the *Stylus* was for the moſt part of Iron; and that it was not only pointed, but ſharp, at the Edges; as may be obſerved from *Prudentius in paſſione Caſſiani*,

Inde alii ſtimulos & acumina ferrea vibrant,
Qua parte aratis cera ſulcis ſcribitur,
Et qua ſecti apices abolentur & æquoris hirti
Rurſus niteſcens innovatur area;
Hinc foditur Chriſti Confeſſor, & inde ſecatur,
Pars viſcus intrat molle, pars ſcindit cutem.

As to this, 'tis anſwered, That tho' the *Stylus* was frequently of Iron, to ſerve upon occaſion for a Poinard; yet, ſometimes it was made of Braſs, as *Pignorius* obſerves, *p.* 227. and *Marcellus Medicus* makes mention of ſome of Gold. For certainly the *Tabulæ Ceratæ*, yea even ſome of the *Pugillares* did not require a *Stylus* of harder Metall, ſince the *Romans* did not deſign the Writing ſhould be perpetual, but that it might be eaſily taken out, as we uſe to do with our Stone-Books, or when we write upon Ivory Leaves, to which purpoſe, a Pen of Braſs is much fitter than one of Iron.

Chifletus deſcribes the *Stylus* which was found in *Childerick*'s Tomb, of a figure ſomething different from this; but that might be called more properly the *Pugio* than the *Stylus*: for theſe obſerved by *Pignorius* differ nothing from this, except in the Workmanſhip.

'Tis not impoſſible but that this might have been a Chyrurgical Inſtrument: But if it has, then certainly the *Romans* underſtood the nature of Wounds very ill, to make uſe of Braſs, when Iron was more proper, and more eaſie to be had. Neither can it be thought to have been of any uſe in Sacrifices. Wherefore, of all other conjectures, this will ſtill remain the moſt probable, that it is the *Stylus*. For ſince there can be no Queſtion but many of them were brought by the *Romans* into *Scotland*, it is leſs to be doubted but that ſuch which were accidendentally loſt, might be preſerved entire to this day. *Finis.*